Imam Husayn ibn `Ali
(The Master of Martyrs)

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In the Name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

1 Who is Imam Husayn?

Imam Husayn ibn `Ali is the grandson of Prophet Muhammad, the Messenger of God, (God's peace and blessings be upon them and their progeny). According to Shi`ah Muslims, Imam Husayn is the third Imam of the Muslim community. His father was Imam `Ali ibn `Abī Talib (God's peace and blessings be upon him), known as the 'Commander of the Faithful' and for Shi`ah Muslims, the first Imam and leader of the Muslim community after Prophet Muhammad. Imam `Ali was raised by Prophet Muhammad and was the most virtuous, noble, magnanimous, the bravest and strongest man among the companions of Prophet Muhammad and the first believer in the religion of Islam. Imam Husayn's mother was the Truthful One, Fatima al-Zahra (God's peace and blessings be upon her), the daughter and the only remaining child of Prophet Muhammad from whom the Prophet's progeny continued. His brother was Imam Hasan ibn `Ali (God's peace and blessings be upon them) and according to the Shi`ah Muslims the second Imam of the Muslim community.

Prophet Muhammad, his daughter Fatima al-Zahra, his son-in-law Imam `Ali, their two sons Imam Hasan and Imam Husayn and the nine Imams from the progeny of Imam Husayn who came after him (God's peace and blessings be upon them) are known as the Ahl al-Bayt (literally: People of the House). Shi`ah Muslims believe these individuals were infallible and pure and sinless.

2 His Birth and Names

According to popular opinion, Imam Husayn (God's peace and blessings be upon him) was born on either the 3rd or 5th of Sha`ban 4 A.H. (8th January 626 C.E.).[1] After his birth Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him and his progeny) himself carried out the Islamic rituals of reciting the call to prayer in his right and left ears and named him Husayn.

During the time of Imam Husayn's infancy, Archangel Gabriel used to talk to him and rock him to sleep.[2]

Imam Husayn is also known as Abu Abdillah, Abu l-`Aimmah (Father of Imams), Sayyid al-Shuhadā (Master of Martyrs) and Abu Masākīn (Father of the Poor). The reason he was called the 'Father of the Poor' was that caring for the poor was his custom and the custom of his ancestors and progeny.

One day, Imam Husayn passed by a group of destitute people who had laid out their cloaks and were eating dry bread. When they saw Imam Husayn they invited him to join them. Imam Husayn came down from his horse and said, "God does not like the arrogant."

He then sat down and ate with them. He then told them, "I have accepted your invitation and you too must then accept mine."

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[1]Sheikh Tūsī. *Miṣbāḥ al-Mutihajjid*. Beirut: Mu`assasah Fiqh Shī`ah, 1411 A.H., P.826. Sayyid ibn Tawūs. *Al-Luhūf `Alā Qatli al-Ṭufūf*, Farsi translation by Faraj Allah Ilāhī. Qom: Selseleh, 1384 H.S., p.13. Allamah Majlisī. *Biḥār al-Anwār*. Beirut: Mu`asisah al-wafā` 1404 A.H., v.98, p.347.

[2]Grand Ayatollah Sayyid Taqī Ṭabaṭaba`ī Qommī. *Shahīd Karbala*. Qom: Inteshārāt Mufīd, 1370 H.S., p.24.

He took them to his house and gave them all the food which he had put aside for his guests.[3]

There are also many narrations about Imam Hasan and Imam Husayn (God's peace and blessings be upon them) and their noble father and mother fasting while giving their food away to the poor.[4]

He was also known by many epithets, some of which are 'al-Shahīd al-Sa`īd' (the Blissful Martyr), al-Sabṭ al-Thanī (the second of the (Imams) descended from Prophet Muhammad, God's peace and blessings be upon them), al-Sayyid (Master), Zakī (pure from sins and pious), Proof for the Essence of God and many more.

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[3]Allamah Majlisī. *Biḥār al-Anwār*. Beirut: Mu`asisah al-Wafā` 1404 A.H., v.98, p.347.

[4]Sheikh Furāt Kūfī. *Tafsīr Furāt*. Mu`asseseye Chāp wa Nashr, 1410 A.H., pp.519-526.

3 What does the Qur`ān say about Imam Husayn?

Many verses have been revealed in honour of Imam Husayn and the rest of the Ahl al-Bayt. The following verses are just a few examples:

> And they give food out of love for Him to the poor and the orphan and the captive, (saying,) 'We only feed you for God's sake. We desire from you neither reward nor thanks. Surely we fear from our Lord a stern, distressful day.' Therefore God will guard them from the evil of that day and cause them to meet with joy and blissful happiness. And reward them, because they were patient, with paradise and silk.[5]

Also the following verse:

> O you who believe! Obey God and obey the Messenger and those in authority from among you;...[6]

'Those in authority from among you' refers to the twelve

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[5]*Qur`ān*, Chapter: al-Insān (Human Being) (76), verses 8-12. For the exegesis of the text see: Grand Ayatollah Ya`sūbedīn Rastegārī. *Al-Basā`ir*. Qom: Al-Muṭba`at al-Islāmīyah, 1399-1413 A.H., v.51, p.53. Jalāl al-Dīn Sīyūtī reports from ibn Abbas that this verse refers to `Ali ibn Abī Tālib and Fatima, daughter of the Messenger of God, see: *Al-Dar al-Manthūr*. Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1993, v.8., p.371.

[6]*Qur`ān*, Chapter: al-Nisā (Women) (4), verse 59.

Imams.[7] These twelve Imams are from the first, Imam `Ali ibn Abī Tālib (the Commander of the Believers), Imam Hasan ibn `Ali (al-Mujtabā), Imam Husayn ibn `Ali (Master of the Martyrs), Imam `Ali ibn al-Husayn (al-Sajjād), Imam Muhammad ibn `Ali (al-Bāqir), Imam Ja`far ibn Muhammad (al-Sādiq), Imam Mūsā ibn Ja`far (al-Kādhim), Imam `Ali ibn Mūsā (al-Riḍā), Imam Muhammad ibn `Ali (al-Jawād), Imam `Ali ibn Muhammad (al-Hādī), Imam Hasan ibn `Ali (al-`Askarī), Imam Hujjat ibn al-Hasan (al-Mahdī) (God's peace and blessings be upon them).[8]

In the verse of the Qur`ān:

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[7]For the prophetic narrations that there will be twelve Imams for the Muslim community after Prophet Muhammad refer to the following sources in Sunni narrative collections: Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal. *Musnad*. Cairo: Mu`assasah Qurṭabah, v.5, pp.92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 99, 101, 105, 107, 108; Muhammad ibn Ismā`īl Bukhārī. *Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī*. Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1401 A.H., v.9, p.81, near the end of the book of '*ahkam*'; Muslim al-Nisābūrī. *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*. Beirut: Dār al-Ṭaybah, 1426 A.H., v.2, pp.882-883, under the section of the book of 'imārah'; Muhammad ibn Futūḥ al-Ḥamīdī. *Al-Jam` Bayn al-Saḥīḥayn Muslim wa Bukhārī*. Beirut: Dār al-Nashr, 2002, v.1, p.204; Sulaymān Ṭabarānī. *Al-Mu`jim al-Kabīr*. Musil: Maktabah al-Ulūm wa al-Ḥikam, 1983, v.2, pp. 196, 197, 199, 206, 208, 214, 215, 218, 223, 226, 240, 248, 253, 254, 255, 275, 306, 310, 318, 323, 344, 357, 363, 364, 365, 367, 368, 369... and many more.

[8]Shi`ah Muslims believe that Imam al-Mahdī (God's peace and blessings be upon him), born on the 15th of Sha`bān, 255 A.H., is still alive and the Imam of our time but in occultation. He will reappear to establish justice and tranquillity throughout the world.

> But whoever disputes with you in this matter after what has come to you of knowledge, then say, "Come let us call our sons and your sons and our women and your women and ourselves and your selves, then let us be earnest in prayer, and pray for the curse of God on the liars."[9]

Only five people comprised the side of the Muslims in the event that this verse refers to and they were Fatima al-Zahra, the daughter of Prophet Muhammad (who represented 'our women'), Imam Hasan and Husayn (who represented 'our sons') and the Prophet himself and Imam `Ali (who represented 'ourselves').[10]

Also the following sentence in the Qur`ān, chapter al-Ahzāb, verse 33, is about the Ahl al-Bayt:

> Indeed, Allah desires to keep away the uncleanness from only you, O People of the House (Ahl al-Bayt), and to purify you a thorough purifying.

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[9]*Qur`ān*, Chapter: Āli Imrān (The Family of Imran) (3), verse 61.

[10]For example see: Sheikh Ṣadūq. *`Uyūn Akhbār al-Riḍā*. Tehran: Inteshārāt Jahān, v.1, p.85 and Muhammad ibn Sulayman al-Kūfī al-Qāḍī. *Manāqib Amīr al-Mu`minīn*. Majma` Ihyā al-Thiqāfah al-Islāmīyah, 1412 A.H., v.2, p.502. Also refer to the following Sunni references: Muhammad ibn `Isā al-Tirmidhī. *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*. Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1996, v.5, p.103, narration number 2999; Jalāl al-Dīn Siyūtī. *Al-Dar al-Manthūr*. Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1993, v.2., p.39; Aḥmad ibn `Ali Asqalānī al-Shāfi`ī . *Fatḥ al-Bārī*. Beirut: Dār al-Ma`rifah, 1379 A.H., v.7, p.74 and many more.

The above sentence in the Qur`ānic verse, unlike the sentences that come before it, is not about the wives of Prophet Muhammad (God's peace and blessings be upon him and his progeny). It is the rules of the Arabic language that make it clear that this verse cannot refer only to the wives of Prophet Muhammad. The pronouns referring back to those who are the purified ones, both when referring to the keeping away of uncleanness and the purifying is a masculine plural second person. The pronoun used in the verse can be transliterated as '*kum*' while a feminine plural second person would be '*kunn*'. In the Arabic language the pronoun '*kum*' is only used either when referring to a group of people consisting of more than two men or a group of people that consists of both men and women.

What constitutes as conclusive and definitive proof that this verse is not about the wives of Prophet Muhammad is both authentic successive narrations (*tawatur*) that have come down to us from Prophet Muhammad as well as the rational conclusion that can be inferred from the verse. The Narration of the Cloak (*Hadith al-Kisā*) that describes the situation when the said verse was revealed tells us undoubtedly who the People of the House (Ahl al-Bayt) are. They include Prophet Muhammad himself, `Ali ibn Abī Tālib, Fatima al-Zahra, Imam Hasan and Imam Husayn (God's peace and blessings be upon them).[11]

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[11]Sheikh al-Kulaynī. *Al-Uṣūl min al-Kāfī*. Tehran: Dār al-Kitāb al-Islāmīyah, 1383 H.S., v.1, pp.286-288, 423; Furāt ibn Ibrāhīm Kūfī. *Tafsīr Furāt*. Mu`asseseye Chāp wa Nashr, 1410 A.H., p.110; Amīn al-Islām Tabarsī. *I`lām al-Warī*. Tehran: Dār al-Kitāb al-Islāmīyah, pp.148-149; Sheikh Ṣadūq. *Al-Amālī*. Inteshārat Kitābkhāneye Islāmīyah, 1362 H.S. pp.472-473, 525; Sheikh Tūsī. *Al-Amālī*. Qom: ⟶

The purity referred to in the verse is complete purity in every sense that is present throughout the life of the purified ones. This includes all aspects of life such as beliefs, ethics and practice. Clearly, all of the Prophet's wives did not fit this description either throughout their lifetime or at some point during their life. Two of Prophet Muhammad's wives, namely, Ā`yishah, the daughter of Abu Bakr and Hafsah, the daughter of `Umar, were strictly criticized for their misdeeds in the Qur`ān and even threatened with divorce.[12] Hence,

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⟵ Inteshārāt Dār al-Thiqāfah, 1414 A.H., pp.248-249; Muhammad ibn Sulayman al-Kūfī al-Qāḍī. *Manāqib Amīr al-Mu`minīn*. Majma` Ihyā al-Thiqāfah al-Islāmīyah, 1412 A.H., v.2, p.505 and many more. Also see in the Sunni narrative collections: Muslim al-Nisābūrī. *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*. Beirut: Dār al-Ṭaybah, 1426 A.H., v.2, p.1136, under the section of the book of '*Faḍā`il Ahl Bayt al-Nabī*;Muhammad ibn Abdullah al-Ḥākim al-Nīsābūrī. *Al-Mustadrak `Alā al-Saḥīḥḥayn*. Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-Ilmīyah, 1990, v.2, p.451, v.3, pp.158-159, v.10, p.457; Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal. *Musnad*. Cairo: Mu`assasah Qurṭabah, v.1, p.330, v.7, p.143; Muhammad ibn `Isā al-Tirmidhī. *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*. Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1996, v.5, pp.262-263, narration number 3205, v.6, p.125, narration number 3787; Fakhr al-Dīn Muhammad al-Rāzī. *Tafsīr al-Kabīr*. Dār al-Ihyā al-Tirāth al-`Arabī, v.8, p.80; Nūr al-Dīn `Ali ibn Abī Bakr al-Haythamī. *Majma` al-Zawā`id wa Manba` al-Fawā`id*. Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1412 A.H., v.9, p.157; Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal. *Faḍā`il al-Saḥḥābah*. Beirut: Mu`assasah al-Risālah, 1983, v.2, pp.587 and 682; Aḥmad ibn Abdullah al-Ṭabarsī. *Dhakha`ir al-`Aqabī*. Cairo: Maktabah al-Qudsī, 1356 A.H., pp.87-88; Aḥmad ibn al-Husayn al-Bayhaqī. *Sunan al-Kubrā*. Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, v.5, p.112; and many more.

[12]See: *Qur`ān*, Chapter: al-Taḥrīm (The Prohibition) (66) ⟶

this verse cannot refer to them and must refer only to those mentioned in the Narration of the Cloak and the Imams.[13]

The following sentence in the Qur`ān, chapter al-Shūrā (42), verse 23, has also been revealed in regards to the Ahl al-Bayt as it is evident from the sentence itself:

> ...Say: I do not ask of you any reward for it but love for my near relatives;...

We already discussed the issue of who constitutes the individuals referred to as the 'near relatives' in this verse. It is none other than the Ahl-al-Bayt (God's peace and blessings be upon them. The discussion that will follow in the next chapter will make it more clear who the beloved of the Prophet Muhammad (God's peace and blessings be upon him and his progeny) are.

⟶ and the reason for its revelation for further details. For example, see the account in the Sunni narrative collection: Muhammad ibn `Isā al-Tirmidhī. *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*. Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1996, v.6, pp.345-347, narration number 3318.

[13]That is, the Imams of the Ahlul Bayt (God's peace and blessings be upon them).

4 What did Prophet Muhammad say about Imam Husayn?

The Messenger of God (God's peace and blessings be upon him and his progeny) has said about Imam Hasan and Imam Husayn (God's peace and blessings be upon them), "I love whoever loves Hasan and Husayn. Whoever I love, God loves and whoever God loves, He will cause to enter paradise. I hate and God (also) hates whoever hates them and whoever God hates He will cause them to enter the fire."[14]

He also said, "These two sons of mine are my two sweet basils (that will sweeten) the world."[15]

Prophet Muhammad (God's peace and blessing be upon him and his progeny) also said, "Hasan and Husayn are the

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[14]Sheikh al-Mufīd. *Kitāb al-Irshād*. Qom: Congereye Sheikh Mufīd, 1413 A.H., v.2, p.28. For a similar narration in Sunni narrative collections see for example: Muslim al-Nisābūrī. *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*. Beirut: Dār al-Ṭaybah, 1426 A.H., v.2, p.1136, under the section of the book of Faḍā`il wa al-Husayn and Muhammad ibn `Isā al-Tirmidhī. *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*. Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1996, v.6, pp.114-115, narration number 3769.

[15]Sheikh al-Mufīd. *Kitāb al-Irshād*. Qom: Congereye Sheikh Mufīd, 1413 A.H., v.2, p.28. Also for the same narration refer to the following references in the Sunni narrative collection as an example: Muhammad ibn `Isā al-Tirmidhī. *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*. Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1996, v.6, p.115, narration number 3770; Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal. *Musnad*. Cairo: Mu`assasah Qurṭabah, v.2, p.85, 93, 114, 153, v.5, p.51 and more.

Masters of the Youth of Paradise."[17]

The Messenger also stated, "Husayn is from me and I am from Husayn. (May) God love anyone who loves Husayn. Hasan and Husayn are two of those (who from) among my progeny (will be Imams)."[18]

The Prophet also stated, "I will make war with whoever makes war with them and I will make peace with whoever makes peace with them."[19]

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[17]Muhammad ibn `Isā al-Tirmidhī. *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*. Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1996, v.6, p.114, narration number 3768, p.121, narration number 3781; Nūr al-Dīn `Ali ibn Abī Bakr al-Haythamī. *Majma` al-Zawā`id wa Manba` al-Fawā`id*. Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1412 A.H., v.9, p.178, 182, 183, 184.

[18]Sheikh al-Mufīd. *Kitāb al-Irshād*. Qom: Congereye Sheikh Mufīd, 1413 A.H., v.2, p.127. See also the following Sunni references: Muhammad ibn `Isā al-Tirmidhī. *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*. Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1996, v.6, p.118, narration number 3775; Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal. *Musnad*. Cairo: Mu`assasah Qurṭabah, v.4, p.172; `Alā al-Dīn `Ali Ibn Balabān al-Fārsī. *Saḥīḥ ibn Ḥabān*. Mu`assisah al-Risālah, 1414 A.H., v.15, p.428 and more.

[19]See, for example, in the Shi`ah narrative collection: Sheikh Sadūq. *`Uyūn Akhbār al-Riḍā*. Tehran: Inteshārāt Jahān, v.2, p.59; Muhammad ibn Sulayman al-Kūfī al-Qāḍī. *Manāqib Amīr al-Mu`minīn*. Majma` Ihyā al-Thiqāfah al-Islāmīyah, 1412 A.H., v.2, p.156 and many more; and in the Sunni narrative collections: Muhammad ibn Abdullah al-Ḥākim al-Nīsābūrī. *Al-Mustadrak `Alā al-Saḥīḥḥayn*. Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-Ilmīyah, 1990, v.3, p.161; Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal. *Musnad*. Cairo: Mu`assasah Qurṭabah, v.2, p.442 and more.

He (God's peace and blessings be upon him and his progeny), before leaving this world, in his last sermon said, "I am leaving among you two weighty things: the book of God (i.e., the Qur`ān) and my kindred, the People of my House (Ahl al-Bayt). The two will never separate until they come back to me by the Pond (of *al-Kawthar*)."[20]

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[20]This is a well known narration known as Hadīth Thaqalayn (the Narration of Two Weighty Things or the Narration of Two precious Things). Its authenticity is agreed upon by Shi`ah as well as Sunni. Hence, we will suffice here with quoting a number of references from the Sunni narrative collections as an example: Muslim al-Nisābūrī. *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*. Beirut: Dār al-Ṭaybah, 1426 A.H., v.2, pp.1130-1131, under the section of the book of Faḍā`il `Ali ibn Abī Ṭālib; Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal. *Musnad*. Cairo: Mu`assasah Qurṭabah, v.42, p.68; Jalāl al-Dīn Siyūtī. *Al-Dar al-Manthūr*. Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1993, v.1., p.288 and v.6, p.40; Aḥmad ibn al-Husayn al-Bayhaqī. *Sunan al-Kubrā*. Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, v.7, p.442.

5 His Martyrdom

Prophet Muhammad (God's peace and blessings be upon him and his progeny) made his final speech and received his last revelation in a place known as Ghadīr Khum. In that speech, in accordance with the commandment of God, he appointed his son-in-law, Imam `Ali ibn `Abī Ṭālib as his vicegerent and the spiritual and political leader of the Muslim community.[21] He had emphasized the vicegerency and leadership of Imam `Ali on many different occasions during his prophetic mission, a prime example of which was the first time he invited the leaders of his tribe to accept Islam.[22] After appointing Imam

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[21]For a comprehensive analysis of the rational and narrative evidences that without doubt demonstrate that the Commander of the Faithful Imam `Ali ibn Abī Ṭālib was appointed as the leader of the Muslim community after Prophet Muhammad (God's peace and blessings be upon them) and the prophetic traditions about his merits see the book *Al-Ghadīr* by Allamah `Abdul Husayn Amīnī. Also, for a similar discussion see the short treatise in Farsi: Grand Ayatollah Vahid Khorasani. *Be Yād Awwal Maẓlūm Rūzegār*. Qom: Madreseye Imam Bāqir al-Ulūm and in Arabic: Grand Ayatollah Vahid Khorasani. *Fī Dhikrā Awwal Maẓlūm `Ālam al-Basharīyah*. Qom: Madreseye Imam Bāqir al-Ulūm, 1425 A.H.

[22]Furāt ibn Ibrāhīm. Tafsīr Furāt. Mu`asseseye Chāp wa Nashr, 1410 A.H., pp.301-302; Sheikh al-Mufīd. *Kitāb al-Irshād*. Qom: Congereye Sheikh Mufīd, 1413 A.H., v.1, pp.48-50; Ibn Shahr Āshūb. *Manāqib Āli Abī Ṭālib*. Qom: `Allamah, 1379 A.H., v.2, p.25; Allamah Majlisī. ⟶

`Ali as his vicegerent and leader of the Muslim community the following verse was revealed to him from God: "This day have I perfected for you your religion and completed My favour on you and chosen for you Islam as a religion."[23]

After Prophet Muhammad (God's peace and blessings be upon him and his progeny) passed away, Abu Bakr and `Umar conspired and forced people to accept Abu Bakr as the leader (i.e., Caliph) of the Muslim community.[24] Imam `Ali, his wife and daughter of the Prophet Fatima al-Zahra and their supporters did not pay allegiance to Abu Bakr and regarded his claim to caliphate as illegitimate. In order to force them to pay allegiance, Abu Bakr and `Umar with their friends attacked the house of the daughter of Prophet Muhammad, Fatima al-Zahra (God's peace and blessings be upon her), and severely injured her, as a result killing her unborn child called

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⟶ *Bihār al-Anwār*. Lebanon: Mu`asseseye al-Wafa` Beirut, 1404 A.H., v.18, p.187. Also see the same narration in the following sources by Sunni historians and theologians: Muhammad ibn Jarīr Ṭabarī. *Tārīkh Ṭabarī: Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*. Cairo: Dār al-Ma`ārif Bimisr, 1387 A.H., v.2, pp.320-321 and Abdul Hamīd ibn Abī al-Hadīd. *Sharh Nahj al-Balāghah*. Qom: Kitābkhāneye Ayatollah Mar`ashī, 1404 A.H., v.3, pp.210-211 and 243-244.

[23] *Qur`ān*, Chapter: al-Mā`idah (The Table) (5), verse 3.

[24] For how they conspired to usurp the caliphate see: Al-Ṭabarī, M, J. The History of al-Ṭabarī: The Last Years of the Prophet, trans. Poonawala, I, K. State University of New York Press: Albany, 1990, v.9, pp. 186-194.

Muhsin.[25] Prophet Muhammad had said about his daughter Fatima al-Zahra that, "Whoever hurts her has hurt me and whoever hurts me will bring the wrath of God on themselves."

Abu Bakr appointed `Umar to become the Caliph after him and during the reign of these two many of the Islamic teachings were changed and outlawed.[26] They attacked and

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[25]Sulaym ibn Qays Hilālī. *Kitāb Sulaym ibn Qays Hilālī*, edit. Muhammad Bāqir al-Anṣārī. Qom: Dalīl Mā. 1424 A.H., pp.148-152; Ya`qūbī. *Tārīkh Ya`qūbī*. Tehran: Shirkat Inteshārāt Elmī wa Farhangī, 1374 H.S., v.1, p.527. Allamah Amīnī. *Al-Ghadīr*. Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-`Arabī, 1397 A.H., v.6, p.391; Allamah Majlisī. *Bihār al-Anwār*. Lebanon: Mu`asseseye al-Wafa` Beirut, 1404 A.H., v.28, pp.268-269, 299, v.53, p.17, v.30, p.293, pp.248-249; Ibn Shahr Āshūb. *Manāqib Āli Abī Ṭālib*. Qom: `Allamah, 1379 A.H., v.2, p.209. Also as an example refer to the following sources by Sunni theologians and historians: `Abdul Karīm Shahristānī. *Al-Milal wa al-Nihal*. Beirut: Dār al-Ma`rifah, 1404 A.H., v.1, p.57 and Ibn Qutaybah. *Al-Imamah wa al-Sīyāsah*. Beirut: Dār al-Ma`rifah, v.1, p.19.

[26]For one example of altering of Islamic rules by the second Caliph refer to Al-Bukhārī. Sahīh al-Bukhari: Arabic-English, trans. Muhammad Muhsin Khan. Beirut: Dar al-Arabia Publishing, 1985, v.3, pp.126-127. Recommended prayers are not to be performed in congregation (*jamā`at*) except for the two *Eid* prayers in the absence of the Imam of Ahl al-Bayt. `Umar, however, changed this and blatantly stated that he changed a tradition of the Prophet. There are many more such innovations by `Umar.

enslaved anyone who did not agree with them and adopted an expansionist policy through violence. Under `Umar, the writing and recording of the statements of Prophet Muhammad was outlawed even though many Qur`anic verses relied on them for their interpretation. The Shi`ah of Imam `Ali, however, continued to record them. Imam `Ali and his followers (i.e., the Shi`ah) were a vocal voice against the policies of Abu Bakr and `Umar.

It was during the rule of Abu Bakr and `Umar that Mu`āwīyah ibn Abī Sufyān was appointed as the governor of greater Syria. Mu`āwīyah was from the Banī Umayyah (Umayyad) clan and the son of the worst enemy of Prophet Muhammad during the era of the propagation of Islam. Both Mu`āwīyah and his father Abū Sufyān had fought several wars with Prophet Muhammad and only converted to Islam after Mecca was finally conquered by the Muslims.

`Umar put in place a council that was designed in such a way so as to make sure Uthman, from the Banī Umayyah clan, was chosen as the next Caliph of the Muslim community once `Umar had died. When Uthman became Caliph, he placed people from his clan in positions of power all over the Islamic empire which led to widespread corruption and oppression. Eventually, Muslims having had enough of the corruption and the oppression of Banī Umayyah rebelled against Uthman and killed him. The Muslim community asked Imam `Ali to take up his rightful role as the leader of the community and become the Caliph. Imam `Ali accepted on the condition that they obey him fully and submit to his precise justice. Unlike the previous three Caliphs, Imam `Ali

used to distribute public wealth equally among everyone regardless of their race, social status or even their familial relationship to him. Despite having the wealth of the entire Islamic Empire at his disposal, he used to wear worn-out clothes that he patched himself, he used to sew his own shoes and used to go out into the street at nights and feed the poor, both from among the Muslims and the non-Muslims. At which point in world history has a leader of an empire that comprised of half the world shown such characteristics and piety?! When attending to private matters, he used to use his own oil for the oil lamp that lit his house and not even waste the little amount of oil that was bought from the money of the Muslim community. He held everyone accountable for the money they would take from the treasury. He would only appoint governors in the Islamic empire who were just and would implement his true Islamic policies.

Among those who did not like his policies of social justice was Mu`āwīyah ibn Abī Sufyān who was enjoying his lavish life in the area that had been placed under his control during the leadership of the first three Caliphs. He refused to give up his governorship and obey the order of Imam `Ali who was then the Caliph of the Muslim community. Mu`āwīyah would attack villages and murder, rape, pillage and terrorize them. When Imam `Ali faced him in battle, Mu`āwīyah's army was severely defeated. Mu`āwīyah himself faced certain death but only escaped using cunning tactics and through bribing the heads of Muslim tribes who were more concerned about their own worldly welfare rather than the welfare of Islam

and the Muslim community. Mu`āwīyah set about assassinating the governors that were appointed by Imam `Ali and terrorizing communities and causing civil disturbance within the Islamic empire. He was attempting to spread corruption throughout the empire.

People who did not like Imam `Ali's (God's peace and blessings be upon him) precise justice conspired to murder him. Eventually, they managed to persuade one of his enemies by the name of Ibn Muljim, to murder him in exchange for marrying a girl. No one dared to face Imam `Ali, this great warrior of Islam, in hand to hand combat. Despite being virtuous, merciful, just, polite and humble to perfection, he was also very courageous and strong. Therefore, Ibn Muljim, murdered Imam `Ali in the Mosque of Kūfa while he was busy doing his dawn prayers. This was because Imam `Ali was famous for being completely immersed in his prayer in such a way that he would not pay any attention to his surroundings. Ibn Muljim stabbed him with a poisonous sword on his scalp. Before his martyrdom, Imam `Ali (God's peace and blessings upon him) appointed his son Hasan as the leader of the Muslim community. This appointment as well as the appointment of the ten Imams after him was made by God. God had revealed the names of each Imam to Prophet Muhammad. Imam Hasan had the same characteristics as his father and grandfather in terms of virtue, piety, justice, courage, bravery and all other characteristics of perfection.

However, many of the Shi`ah had been killed and only a few of the true followers of Prophet Muhammad's teachings

were alive. Furthermore, Mu`āwīyah was a cunning individual who would twist everything to his own benefit. For the sake of rescuing true Islam from extinction and in order to show the Muslim community and humanity at large the true face of Mu`āwīyah and his intentions, Imam Hasan made a peace treaty with Mu`āwīyah. The treaty demanded that Mu`āwīyah stop his oppression. Among the many conditions of the peace treaty was that the caliphate of the Muslim community should be transferred to Imam Hasan or his brother Imam Husayn if Imam Hasan was not alive. Mu`āwīyah, on the other hand, had no intention of honouring the agreement. Imam Hasan knew this but as previously mentioned he intended to show the Muslim community and all of humanity who and what kind of a wretched person Mu`āwīyah was.

After taking control of the Islamic empire, Mu`āwīyah in a shameful display shredded the peace treaty. Before his death Mu`āwīyah appointed his son Yazīd to become the Caliph after him. Yazīd was one of the most corrupt and oppressive rulers in world history. He raped, pillaged and murdered at will. He was a drunkard and at one point even demolished the Ka`bah, one of holiest sites of Islam located in Mecca. He wanted to force Imam Husayn (God's peace and blessings be upon him) to pay allegiance to him. However, Imam Husayn could not pay allegiance to such a person. Paying allegiance to him would be to give credibility to his oppressive rule and would mean the end of true Islamic belief.

Thousands of people wrote to Imam Husayn (God's peace and blessings be upon him) and asked him to rescue them from the oppression and corruption of Yazīd. They gave their allegiance to Imam Husayn and gave a solemn promise to aid him in this endeavour. Imam Husayn knew that out of all those people only a handful of individuals were actually serious about their promise. Nevertheless, he could not give into the demands of such an oppressive, wretched and corrupt ruler. He knew that by taking a stand as the grandson of Prophet Muhammad, who many people still remembered the statements that the Prophet had said about him, he would awaken the spirits of men and women to call out for justice and true freedom from oppression and corruption. He set out towards Kūfa with his family members, which included women and children and a few companions. On the way he told his companions that there was no doubt they would all be martyred and no one will come out of this battle alive. Hence, whoever wished to leave should leave at night so that they would not be embarrassed for doing so in front of Imam Husayn.

Imam Husayn's noble nature, piety and magnanimity was to such an extent that some of the honourable people from the army of the enemy joined him. Imam Husayn's army at first had the upper hand when the army of Yazīd under the commandership of Hurr had not received backup and numbered only about a thousand and so. But instead of preventing the enemy from using the water he commanded his followers (i.e., the Shi`ah) to give water to the men and horses of the enemy at a place called Zu Husam. One of the

soldiers in the army of Yazīd were too tired to drink water, Imam Husayn himself lifted the water-skin with his own hands for him and his camel to drink from. While Yazīd's army had not increased in size, one of Imam Husayn's companions said to him that they should fight them at that moment because they would surely defeat them. Imam Husayn replied, "I shall not (be the first) to fight them." The Imam did not even allow the first arrow to be shot from his side. Hurr, observing Imam Husayn's true piety later joined Imam Husayn and was martyred by Yazīd's army.

Imam Husayn's army numbered a hundred or so and included a number of the companions of Prophet Muhammad who were well into their old age and genuine believers in Islam. Yazīd's army was in the tens of thousands. On the 10th day of Muharram year 61 A.H., Yazīd's army slaughtered Imam Husayn and his companions and took his women folk and children captive. Yazīd's army, under the leadership of Umar ibn Sa`d and under the orders of Ubaydullah ibn Zīyad blocked Imam Husayn from taking water from the river. He placed four thousand men to prevent the Imam and his companions from reaching it. The desert of Karbala was scorching hot. The children and women in Imam Husayn's camp were dying from thirst. The cries of the children were being heard crying out for water. The milk in women's breasts had dried due to dehydration. Imam Husayn's brother, Abbas ibn `Ali (God's peace and blessings be upon them), who was also Imam's standard bearer, asked permission from Imam Husayn to bring water from the river Euphrates by going past enemy lines. Abbas

ibn `Ali was a handsome young man with a beautiful appearance. He was also very tall. When he mounted the horse, his feet would touch the ground. Abbas (God's peace and blessings be upon him) broke through Yazīd's army and managed to get to the river. He stopped and filled his water-skin remembering the women and children crying out for water. He did not drink himself and filled the water-skin, put it on his right shoulder and rushed back towards the camp of Imam Husayn. The enemy tried to stop him. They severed his right arm. Abbas took the water-skin and placed it on his left shoulder. The enemy then severed his left arm. Abbas took the water-skin with his teeth. The enemy then shot an arrow into the water-skin at which point the water poured out. The enemy then shot an arrow into the heart of Abbas who was martyred on the bank of the river Euphrates, where his shrine is located till this day.

Yazīd's army attacked the army of Imam Husayn. Despite such extraordinary odds, Imam Husayn and his family and companions fought with courage and bravery and the enemy could not immediately defeat them. Yazīd's army murdered all the men in Imam Husayn's army. The only survivor was the fourth Imam `Ali, son of Imam Husayn, the great grandson of Prophet Muhammad, who due to severe sickness could not go to battle. They did not even spare the Imam's six month old son, `Ali Asghar. Imam Husayn brought out his six month old son from the tent and told the enemy if they do not have mercy on the women, the Imam and his companions then, at least have mercy on the infant child who was dying of thirst. Harmalah, from the army of Yazīd,

aimed at the neck of infant child and shot an arrow through his neck. Later they placed the body of the infant along with the severed heads of Imam Husayn and his companions on top of their spears as they went back to Yazīd.

After the battle they set the tents of Imam Husayn that housed the womenfolk and children of the Imam and his companions on fire and ripped the headscarves of the women from their heads. The fourth Imam, `Ali ibn Husayn was in one of the tents and was sick and could not move. Imam Husayn's sister Zaynab, the granddaughter of Prophet Muhammad (God's peace and blessings be upon them) walked bare footed on the burning tents and rescued her nephew from dying. Later, with her eloquence she defeated Yazīd and his stooges in Yazīd's court when they tried to degrade her and her family. The story of Karbala and the courage and bravery of the companions of Imam Husayn is more detailed than to be summarized in this pamphlet.[27]

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[27]For a detailed account of the movement of Imam Husayn (God's peace and blessings be upon him) and his family and companions towards Karbala and their subsequent martyrdom and imprisonment see: Sayyid ibn Tawūs. *Al-Luhūf `Alā Qatli al-Ṭufūf*, Farsi translation by Faraj Allah Ilāhī. Qom: Selseleh, 1384 H.S.; Sheikh al-Mufīd. *Kitāb al-Irshād*. Qom: Congereye Sheikh Mufīd, 1413 A.H., v.2, pp.30-134; Al-Ṭabarī. *The History of al-Ṭabarī: The Caliphate of Yazīd B. Mu`āwīyah*, trans. I.K.A. Howard. Albany: State University of New York, 1990.

6 Why do the Shi`ah Beat and Flog Themselves?

Every year, in accordance with the Islamic lunar calendar, Shi`ah around the world commemorate the tragic event of the massacre of Imam Husayn (God’s peace and blessings be upon him) and his companions and the taking of his family members to Damascus by force. In order to sympathise with Imam Husayn and his companions, they relive the tragic event with sermons and theatrical acts. They wail, cry and beat themselves with their hands and flog themselves with chains and so forth just to be able to feel a little of the pain that was felt by Imam Husayn and his companions. They do this as a sign that they believe in Islam’s true message of freedom, piety, courage, bravery, helping the oppressed and the needy and standing up against oppression. They do this because they have lost their Imam, one of the greatest and most perfect human beings alive.

The mourning ceremony and expression of sorrow begins from the first of the month of Muharram. The sadness and its resulting mourning rituals peak on the tenth (*Āshūrā*) of the month, the day Imam Husayn (God’s peace and blessings be upon him) was killed. On this day, Shi`ahs around the world stop everything and go out into the streets and declare their sorrow and sadness openly, making everyone aware of the pain they feel and the cause behind it.

Through this commemoration they keep alive the memory of Imam Husayn as well as always remembering and reminding the world of the victims of oppression and tyranny and terror. They declare that they will always answer the call of Imam Husayn and his pure progeny, the twelfth Imam Mahdi.

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Transcription System

ḍ	ض	a	ا
ṭ	ط	b	ب
ẓ	ظ	p	(Persian) پ
`	ع	t	ت
gh	غ	th	ث
f	ف	j	ج
q	ق	ch	(Persian) چ
k	ک	ḥ	ح
g	(Persian) گ	kh	خ
l	ل	d	د
m	م	dh	ذ
n	ن	r	ر
h	ه	z	ز
w	و	zh	(Persian) ژ
v	(Persian) و	s	س
y	ی	sh	ش
` (Sometimes)	ء	ṣ	ص

Arabic long vowels:

ā = آ   ū = و   ī = ي

Common words such as Islam, `Ali and so on are not transliterated.